

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC

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SUBCOMMITTEE ON
RAILROADS, PIPELINES, AND HAZARDOUS
MATERIALS

October 4, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20016

Dear President Biden and Secretary Mayorkas,

The prosperity of our nation depends on the actions we take today to fully integrate immigrants into our communities economically, legally, and across all sectors. Illinois is home to the 5th largest immigrant population in the U.S. and has proudly led the nation as one of the most welcoming states. Illinois leaders and community organizations have made remarkable strides to pass bold legislation that protects and is inclusive of all immigrants. In Illinois, immigrants contribute over \$9.8 billion in federal taxes and \$5.2 billion in state and local taxes - - and their U.S. born children also contribute to our economy. We have embraced immigrants - long-term and recent, because we understand that as immigrants go, so does our state. Yet, given the influx of recent migrants bussed primarily by Texas Governor Abbott's Operation Lone Star, our state is facing fiscal challenges.

Our nation is at a crossroads and we must recognize the humanitarian emergency that has been created through U.S. foreign policy and an outdated immigration system. More than 11 million immigrants continue to live in the shadows while thousands of migrants are callously bussed to welcoming cities and states, including Chicago. Long-term and recent migrants seek the safety and stability no longer afforded to them in their home countries in part due to U.S. actions. These conditions compel us to take humane, but also practical actions for the sake of our national interest. In order for *Bidenomics* to work, we need immigration reform. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, we are suffering from the country's largest workforce shortage with nearly 10 million unfilled jobs. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has stated that between 20 and 60

percent of jobs remained unfilled in key work sectors including manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, financial services, professional and business services, and leisure and hospitality. Moreover, these workforce shortages coupled with demonstrated trends of our aging workforce reaffirm the need to take swift action.

Elected leaders at the city, state, and federal level, along with community organizations have been working hard to welcome the more than 13,000 migrants that continue to arrive. We echo the concerns of immigration organizations and service providers in Illinois and the Chicagoland region to request more federal resources and executive action to continue our work for long-term and recent migrants.

Below are our five requests to meet the humane and economic need:

1. We urge your administration to provide humanitarian parole in place and work permits to both migrants who have recently arrived and those who have lived here for decades – – who have paid taxes and still work without the stability that comes with a work permit. This is one of the most sensible steps to address our labor shortage.
2. We urge you to recapture green cards that had been authorized in previous years but were ultimately never issued and make them available to qualifying migrants. Millions of people have been waiting years, even decades, to receive a green card, despite having their initial applications already approved. This would reduce the years-long visa backlog without increasing annual immigration levels and allow more individuals to apply for a visa.
3. We urge equitable distribution of federal funds for Illinois and the Chicago region. As one of the target states providing transitional services to recent arrivals, it is only equitable to ensure that Illinois is prioritized in future Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)'s Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) funding. This funding is imperative for Illinois' partner non-government organizations who are doing critical work to provide shelter, meals, and security for migrant arrivals.
4. We strongly urge your administration to increase funding for legal support services for newly arrived migrants. The Shelter and Services Program (SSP) was created in the Consolidated Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2023 to provide state agencies and Non Government Organizations (NGOs), with upfront funding for social and legal services to help newly processed asylum seekers. This proactive direct grant assistance would enable better planning for shelter spaces, orientation services, and arranging transportation without compromising an entities' budget.
5. We strongly urge your administration to increase funding for the Citizenship and Integration Grant Program that provides legal services to both long-term migrants and new arrivals. This funding is imperative to ensure qualified community-based organizations continue providing legal services and community education to immigrants.

We are a nation of immigrants, and as such we should embrace our roots. We urge your assistance to ensure we have adequate funding to support the efforts provided by Illinois and the

Chicagoland region. Thank you for your consideration of these urgent requests and we look forward to a prompt response.

Sincerely,



Jesús “Chuy” García
Member of Congress
Illinois’ 4th Congressional District

Co-Signers:

Illinois State Senator Javier Cervantes, 1st District
Illinois State Senator Mike Porfirio, 11th District
Illinois State Senator Celina Villanueva, 12th District
Illinois State Senator Natalie Toro, 20th District
Illinois State Representative Aarón M. Ortiz, 1st District
Illinois State Representative Elizabeth “Lisa” Hernandez, 2nd District
Illinois State Representative Lilian Jimenez, 4th District
Illinois State Representative Abdelnasser Rashid, 21st District
Illinois State Representative Angelica Guerrero-Cuellar, 22nd District
Illinois State Representative Edgar Gonzalez, Jr, 23rd District
Illinois State Representative Theresa Mah, 24th District
Illinois State Representative Jaime M. Andrade Jr., 40th District
Illinois State Representative Norma Hernandez, 77th District
Illinois State Representative Dagmara Avelar, 85th District
Cook County Commissioner Alma E. Anaya, 7th District
Cook County Commissioner Frank J. Aguilar, 16th District
Kane County Commissioner Cherryl Strathmann, 20th District
Metropolitan Water Reclamation District Commissioner Eira L. Corral Sepúlveda
Berwyn Mayor Robert J. Lovero
Chicago Alderperson Julia Ramirez, 12th Ward
Chicago Alderperson Jeylu B. Gutierrez, 14th Ward
Chicago Alderperson Jessie Fuentes, 26th Ward
Chicago Alderperson Michael D. Rodriguez, 22nd Ward
Chicago Alderperson Ruth Cruz, 30th Ward
Chicago Alderperson Carlos Ramirez-Rosa, 35th Ward
Chicago Alderperson Gilbert Villegas, 36th Ward
Chicago Alderperson Andre Vasquez, 40th Ward
Cicero Trustee Blanca Vargas